

Promoting mental health help-seeking through interactive mobile-based narratives: Effectiveness of a depression prevention program among college students



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Keywords:

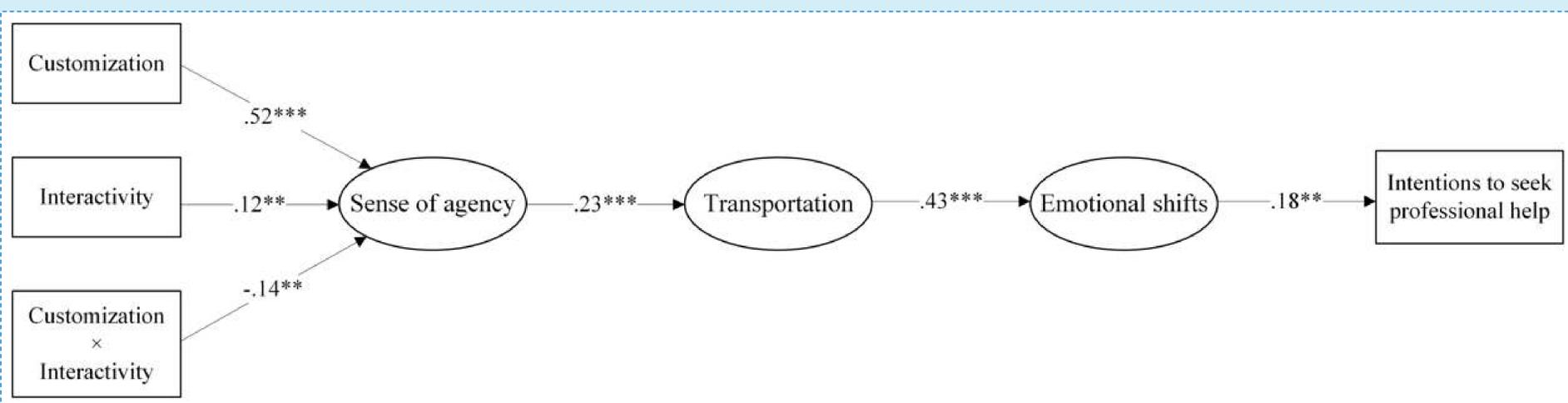
Customization, Interactivity, Transportation, Emotional shifts, Health narratives, Depression

Objectives

College students are facing a growing prevalence of mental health challenges, while they frequently face obstacles in seeking professional help. Drawing upon the agency model in the theory of interactive media effects (TIME) and the transportation-imagery model, this study presents an extended framework to investigate how interface features enhance the persuasive potential of health narratives, thereby improving intentions to seek professional help for depression among Chinese college students.

Results

SEM results indicated that both customization and high interactivity increased the sense of agency. Regarding the interaction effect, the further ANOVA results revealed that the effect of interactivity on enhancing the sense of agency is more pronounced for participants in the non-customization condition, compared to those in the customization conditions. Additionally, sense of agency was positively associated with transportation. As predicted, transportation motivated the emotional shifts, which then positively predicted the users' intentions to seek professional help for depression. Furthermore, the mediation analysis indicated that the effect of customization on users' intentions to seek professional help was mediated by sense of agency, transportation, and emotional shifts.



Method

The present study employs a 2 (customization: with versus without) × 2 (interactivity: high versus low) factorial experiment (N = 373). To validate the experimental stimuli, a mini-program was developed on WeChat, allowing participants to fully navigate the health narrative within the interface.

Conclusion

The interface features demonstrate potential in improving the persuasiveness of health narratives, thereby fostering greater willingness to seek professional help.